NEA delegates approve creation of national campaign for equity and against “Toxic Testing”

*Campaign to focus on assessments and developing real accountability systems*

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The National Education Association (NEA) will launch a national campaign to put the focus of assessments and accountability back on ensuring equity and supporting student learning and end the “test blame and punish” system that has dominated public education in the last decade. The average American student and teacher now spend about 30 percent of the school year preparing for and taking standardized tests. NEA’s nearly 9,000 delegates voted today at its 2014 Representative Assembly for [new measures](http://www.nea.org/grants/33354.htm) to drive student success.

“The testing fixation has reached the point of insanity,” said NEA President Dennis Van Roekel. “Whatever valuable information testing mandates provided have been completely overshadowed by the enormous collateral damage inflicted on too many students. Our schools have been reduced to mere test prep factories and we are too-often ignoring student learning and opportunity in America.”

The measure approves the use of NEA resources to launch a national campaign to end the high stakes use of standardized tests, to sharply reduce the amount of student and instructional time consumed by tests, and to implement more effective forms of assessment and accountability. The impact of excessive testing is particularly harmful to many poor, minority, and special needs students.

“The sad truth is that test-based accountability has not closed the opportunity gaps between affluent and poor schools and students,” said NEA President Dennis Van Roekel. “It has not driven funding and support to the students from historically underfunded communities who need it most. Poverty and social inequities have far too long stood in the way of progress for all students.”

The anti-toxic testing measure calls for governmental oversight of the powerful testing industry with the creation of a “testing ombudsman” by the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Consumer Protection Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission. The position will serve as a watchdog over the influential testing industry and monitor testing companies’ impact on education legislation. NEA will continue to push the president and Congress to completely overhaul ESEA and return to grade-span testing, thus ending NCLB's mandates that require yearly testing, and to lift mandates requiring states to administer outdated tests that are not aligned to school curricula.

“It is past time for politicians to turn their eyes and ears away from those who profit from over-testing our students and listen instead to those who know what works in the classroom,” said Van Roekel.

NEA delegates also [reaffirmed their commitment](http://www.nea.org/grants/33354.htm) to high standards for all students and committed to further working with states that adopted the Common Core State Standards to ensure they are properly implemented and that educators are empowered to lead in that implementation process.

Delegates also passed new language on [improving accountability systems](http://www.nea.org/grants/33354.htm), pushing for implementation of systems providing “real accountability in our public education system,” said Van Roekel. Delegates agreed to convene a broad representative group of NEA leaders from the national, state and local level to develop plans for public school accountability and support systems.

“Educators know that real accountability in public schools requires all stakeholders to place student needs at the center of all efforts. Real accountability in public schools requires that everyone—lawmakers, teachers, principals, parents and students—partner in accepting responsibility for improving student learning and opportunity in America."

Van Roekel insists that in order for real, sustainable change to occur in public education, major work must be done to provide equity in our schools and address the growing inequality in opportunities and resources for students across our nation.

The group will examine what steps NEA can take to build further on the components of excellence in teacher evaluation and accountability identified in [NEA’s Policy Statement on Teacher Evaluation and Accountability,](http://www.nea.org/home/46102.htm) which was approved at the 2011 Representative Assembly in Chicago.

The accountability group will engage stakeholders in the education and civil rights communities to help respond to the growing inequality in opportunities and resources for students across the nation. Inequality must be addressed in order for real, sustainable change to occur in the public education system.

To follow floor action at the NEA 2014 Representative Assembly, please[click here](http://www.nea.org/grants/1357.htm) or follow [@RAtoday](https://mobile.twitter.com/ratoday?p=i) on twitter at [twitter.com/RAToday](http://twitter.com/RAToday).

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